



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Stages of A Woman – Part 2

Guest(s): Jean Lush

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. On today's broadcast, we're continuing a timeless conversation about the emotional and physical changes women experience during menopause. Our guest today is the late Jean Lush, who spent over 30 years as a counselor with CRISTA Ministries in Seattle, Washington. Jean was a best-selling author and was also the first woman certified as a marriage counselor in Washington State. On our last broadcast, Dr. Dobson talked with Jean Lush about her remarkable testimony of how God called her into ministry. Today, she'll be sharing practical wisdom about navigating the menopausal transition. So, here now is Dr. James Dobson to reintroduce our guest, Jean Lush, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We've been talking with counselor Jean Lush, whose had more than 30 years of experience in counseling, has devoted the ministry of counseling, and you do consider it a ministry, don't you, Jean?

Jean Lush: Very much.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. You've devoted it largely to women. And as I understand it, you feel that that God Himself revealed this ministry to women to you.

Jean Lush: Yes. It was a very strange experience really, because you have to believe how happy we were in the house where we were. We had our ideal home in the foothills in Adelaide, and we had dreamed for long years of having this place, I wanted to live and die there. It was three acres, great big eucalyptus trees, the stream down the bottom, everything was ideal and our children loved it. We had almond trees. We had walnut trees. We had flowers everywhere. This was my dream place.

Dr. James Dobson: Australia, for those who don't know.

Jean Lush: This was Australia, yes. And I really loved that house. And at this time when the kids were small, I had this peculiar meeting with the Lord. I can't describe it other than that, that this wasn't where it was going to be. That I would one day

be speaking to women all over the world. This was very odd. And for the moment I had to start and study, and I had to know the Bible from end to end. It was the first thing the Lord told me. The Lord also told me many strange things about my husband too. Everything that was revealed to me has come to pass. You realize what I'm doing here today is talking to women all over. Now, at that time-

Dr. James Dobson: Now you are not a terribly ambitious person. This was not an expression of a big ego.

Jean Lush: Oh, please no. No. Why do you think I was living out in the foothills for, you know what I mean? This lovely, lonely life, where we would have a great chance to bring up our children in the ways that we wanted to, out of the city and everything. No, I can't call myself that because I love the life of a woman. And this was against the natural me that I had the sort of vision. And the vision seemed to say, you will have to prepare yourself for a ministry to women. My training had been largely in literature, great deal in horticulture and that kind of area. Now, a year later, the Lord opened up the way rather suddenly for us to come to this ministry in America, you see, at King's Garden. And you know what?

Dr. James Dobson: In Seattle.

Jean Lush: In Seattle. The first thing that happened, I was put in charge of 45 teenage girls, some of them quite older. This began in a way my first experience to women, as you might say, young women. And then at the same time, I found I had to train myself, you see, at that time, because I had never had a single social science cause in my life before that vision. And so then of course, I started to go to the university and started quietly, sometimes by mail, just as I could, I started to fit this in. Now this was an obedience, that vision, that strange vision the Lord gave me that I had to look to the unknown, just like Abraham said, go to a land, which I shall show you of.

And always that was the back of my mind. The training got more and more difficult to fulfill, of course. And anyway, I took courses at that time in all the social sciences to get me ready, always with a strange vision there. Then the time came for graduate work, and again, I knew that I had to go ahead. At that time, man, we were poor. There was no money and there was nothing to do this, but I had to go on. I never had worried about what other people said, because the Lord had already said what I had to do.

Dr. James Dobson: And you had three children at this time to take care of too, didn't you?

Jean Lush: Yes. And of course, they always were preeminent in my life and so training was slow. I fitted it in when I could. At one time, when we were really out of money, you wouldn't believe, but the University of Washington awarded me a scholarship simply to go on and do the work that I was doing. And so always

somehow, we got by. By the way, you wouldn't believe what I looked like in those days. Oh, I think I wore a man shirt. I had one cardigan; I looked a fright. There was no money for anything. But the vision was there and I had to go ahead really and finish the training.

Dr. James Dobson: And you were obedient to it.

Jean Lush: Yes. I always was obedient to that vision. Now this was how it got started. Now, when I came finished, then I didn't know what to do either, because it seemed like I ought to go back in Christian work. But still at that time, the Lord led me into further and further training. I realized then I must start my training to be a marriage counselor, and that's a different kind of training. And so, then I chose a place, which was family counseling services, where I'd get a lot of supervision and still fulfilling what I had to do. So I've always tried to be as qualified as I could for what the Lord wanted me to do. And so that's how it really all began.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have developed an expertise in so many areas related to the family, and marriage and parenting. And we're going to talk today about the menopausal understanding that you have. We talked, as I said, about the pre-menopausal condition. Let me pose a difficult situation to you, and then you take it from there. Let's suppose we're talking right now to a woman who is in the pits. She's 44 years of age. She has no energy. She's totally depleted. She's depressed a good part of the time. She is thinking those what if thoughts and if only thoughts that you talked about the last time. All kinds of things going on physically. Menstrual periods are stopping and her body's changing. She's aware of that. Talk directly to her, and give her some advice and tell her what's happening to her body.

Jean Lush: Well, now of course, she may come in as a client. And the first thing I would want her to do is to find a good gynecologist. And then I would suggest that, of course she must explore medical treatment with such a gynecologist. But then I might want her to tell me about the particular kinds of perhaps depression that she's going through. Now, she can have all kinds of symptoms. By the way, not all women going through menopause have the classic symptoms.

Dr. Dobson: Yes, I think that's important.

Jean Lush: A lot of symptoms are sort of projected. Now, for instance, I've seen people very occupied with say, sickness or death, for instance at this time. May be a sort of a substitution kind of thing they'd be going through. Others may push on to overwork. But I do think that any woman who tries to say, I never felt a thing, I would have to chuckle, because I'll guarantee there would be some changes manifest to those who knew her at this time. So there are some emotional changes that simply are apparent to others, if not for yourself.

Dr. James Dobson: But not everybody falls apart.

Jean Lush: Oh, no. So actually, what most women go through this fairly well with some annoying discomforts, really was what we were talking about. I don't think we should lose the perspective of this thing.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe the difference between pre-menstrual tension and menopausal symptoms. How do those differ for the woman who's experienced both?

Jean Lush: I think there's some difference. Now, this is what I think, remember now. I think that the premenopausal depression is a nasty, biting, vicious kind of an anger in which you mostly want to bite something. You want to hurt. You are destructive.

Dr. James Dobson: That's pre-menstrual tension you're talking about.

Jean Lush: That's pre-menstrual tension. It's almost like vicious and biting. But I have found now, we'll look at the woman in the early 40s, what we call a premenopausal phase. It's more of a blah, droopy sort of feeling that may be more thinking about ourselves as a miserable human being kind of thing. And then I think when we move into what I call a full blown menopause itself, where we've got the physical symptoms and we really know she's in it, then I think we're likely at times to get phases of depression in which there are some days you don't want to do a thing, you only want to stay in bed. And then all of a sudden, a few days later, you're okay again. I think there's more of a phasic depression, which really comes and goes, as I've seen at this time.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I've seen an irrationality there though, too, with regard to jealousy and that the husband may be involved in something, which he hadn't even thought about being involved in.

Jean Lush: Oh, so have I.

Dr. James Dobson: And a distortion of reality, an inability to assess circumstances sometimes.

Jean Lush: Now, I put down just a few things here, course the list is endless and every woman is very different. I jotted down here, nervous exhaustion, more extreme fluctuation in mood and fatigue, diminished energy. And of course you all know the hot flashes, and the sweating, the headaches, anxiety, irritability. There's a tendency now for some phases, a more deeper depression you see than we've seen before. Feelings of sadness or loss, a dreary sense of dissatisfaction, a preoccupation with the body now that I think is even deeper, melancholy, anxiety, frigidity, easily offended, looks for slights. Oh, regressive behavior, I think is very important at this phase. Now earlier, I haven't seen that like I have now.

Dr. James Dobson: Explain it for those that don't know.

Jean Lush: Going back to an earlier level of satisfaction where you once felt better about yourself, but doing things that are not particular fitting for your age. It might be more adolescent like behavior. And I have certainly seen quite a bit of that appearing at times. Poor judgment now about what's appropriate for your age type of thing may appear really at times. Hey, by the way, let's bring up the issue of Queen Victoria we just laughed about before.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, right.

Jean Lush: She had this stuff very heavily, now we know. I'll tell you why we know, the dear lady wrote so much. I've finished two books on her life. She had everything confiding to diaries. We know a lot about her. And she went so childish, by the way, especially in her premenopausal. And she'd go pound on her husband's door and yell at him. And there was nothing you could do right when she went through these. And look what she did, she created the greatest empire that ever was. She messed in all European politics and had her kids all married off. You know what I mean? In the best of blue blood circles. By the way, I don't think that was so hot.

Dr. James Dobson: She put her stamp on her whole age.

Jean Lush: Oh my word she did. And we can't exactly say that she was hampered by even the weaknesses that she went through any more than I think that we, as women, are hampered, because we say there are special things to being a woman, and there are some things we battle with and we come out strong. So I think that's silly that we should have to cover up some of the things we battle with.

Dr. James Dobson: It's interesting to surmise who else in history might have been going through this. Though the first one that comes to my mind is Abraham Lincoln's wife, who nearly drove him bananas when he was in the White House. I'm sure you've read some of those details. Anybody else you can think of?

Jean Lush: We've got some pretty famous missionaries at times, but the trouble is in missionary literature, perhaps this was covered up a good deal, the way their wives appeared to have very great difficulties, you see, at this time. But I still think that if we face these things and know them for what they are, we're going to have a lot less trouble with them. You see, after all, acknowledge and awareness is going to bring control. And I don't like covering these things up and letting everybody suffer in silence, because then I think it really hurts if you feel that you're alone. Besides, it comes down to feeling like that you're an awful person and an awful Christian if we let women just suffer alone and we don't bring these things out. I don't see it as negative that we bring it out. I see it as we're beginning to share so we lessen the fear and are able to bring more control into it.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about the positive side, Jean. I know you know the limitations of your training and that stops at the door, the medical realm. But it can be treated. I think we do need to say that at this point.

Jean Lush: Oh, yes. And what wonderful treatments we have now at our disposal for many, many women that can change it. And I sought medical treatment when I went through the menopause, because I was very negative when I went through it and medical treatment changed me very quickly. I got very quick relief, you see, here in doing that. But now let's look at it a little bit of what happens. Look, some women go through this very fast. We're not really talking about years and years.

Dr. James Dobson: I was about to ask you the time factor, how long it last?

Jean Lush: My mother was over in a month. She would happen to go on a sea voyage and was immediately better in one month and never looked back again. And so, some women go through this in a very short time without too much going on. But I think I like to refer to this as a small door to the larger life. And all of a sudden, now women are entering into the greatest phase they've ever had. Our marriage statistics show this, that marriages, when this is over, are the greatest that people have ever had, by the way.

Dr. James Dobson: If they survive it, if they get through it.

Jean Lush: Yes. By the way, yes, we are concerned sometimes steadying the boat in the rocky waters of the 40s. Yes, we are. But after that period, marriages are very great and women themselves emerge with a lot of great ability, and perhaps the greatest ability really that they've ever had. Now, you remember the writings of Benedict, the greatest woman out on this, I suppose that ever lived. Remember, she had an analytic school in Chicago. Her book, she has a very large book, is very great. And I'm afraid it's out of print, but it's a marvelous book. And she particularly has got the idea that once the reproductive cycle has closed down, it's like the owner's free to do fresh things, you see. And so we have more energy at our disposal for learning for greater socialization, and for, as she puts it, larger feeling.

She feels we're not so narrow, not so, perhaps if we've tended to be petty or we've tended to take slights heavily, she feels now we're free from that. And she feels that we are capable of becoming the rulers, the great people after that. Now, one time in my own menopause groups, we decided to have a look around at all the people in the world that were famous. And it was amazing how many of them we realized were really post-menopausal women that were leading the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Golda Meir, and people like that.

Jean Lush: Golda Meir was one of them, I remember. I wish I could remember some of the others. Oh, we also looked at Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's life. And we looked at her early life, and then compared the great ministries of the great things she did toward this later period. Now, I am very strong on the point of every woman now has got to go on finding out what the Lord wants her to do, because I believe I could give you some fabulous stories about women who found the ministry, even though they had so very, very few really gifts to start with, who simply looked to the Lord.

I don't believe the Lord is actually concerned with our capabilities. It's their availability, you see, that the Lord really wants from us. Now, I don't want to imply that every woman's got to go into great training to be something, that just happened to be my life, you see. But that has got nothing to do with the way the Lord uses people, is it? You know what I mean? Perhaps some may be called to do that. But every woman can have a great ministry, and I think we got to be preoccupied now with that larger life as a Christian, really, at this time is going to be the biggest answers now that we can talk about it.

Dr. James Dobson: Just as the energies of the body are not being dissipated on the reproductive process, whether pregnant or not, that whole process of the menstrual cycle drains the body of energy. And once that closes off, you should have more energy. But that's also symbolic of the greater energy you should have now that your effort is not going into motherhood. Raising a toddler, and raising a teenager, and cooking, and cleaning, and changing diapers and doing all that stuff, is also an extremely important function, but one, when it's over, leaves a woman free to all kinds of things for the Lord and ministries.

Jean Lush: Now I'm a very strong believer in that, and so, of course I see that this whole area we're talking about is the gateway. You see what I mean there too? What I would call simply the larger life. Honestly, I think if I'd sailed through and hadn't been touched by these things, I doubt if I would know about them or be sympathetic about them. I've had them badly.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Jean, it's really interesting that the human female is the only species in all the animal kingdom, we're not really animals, we got a soul, but you know what I mean? In all the animal kingdom, the human female is the only one that lives for an appreciable amount of time after the reproductive cycle is over?

Jean Lush: Yes. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And God must have ordained that for a purpose. He wants something from women at that time.

Jean Lush: Yes. Yes. That really is a very important thing for a woman to feel, you know what I mean? They don't stop at this time. I think now is the time that we push on to perhaps ... See, often when women, when they're first married, they may have had many kinds of goals, but often they have to now be dropped, perhaps.

You can't go ahead with them during these years when the family takes so much energy. And I think sometimes we can just go back and look at some of the things that we really would have liked to have done. You see, now's the time to get ahead and do them.

Dr. James Dobson: Speak to the husband of the menopausal woman. She's in the pits, what does he do?

Jean Lush: Well, he needs a lot more education. He really does, because remember at times this woman's going to be just a plain drag. And I think that I wish we could educate every man to believe it's not his fault. You see, it's so hard, because remember-

Dr. James Dobson: And it may not be her fault either.

Jean Lush: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's nobody's fault.

Jean Lush: Yes. And so the husband does need a lot of education really to give some support, and particularly helping a woman feel that she's really great and nothing's going to change really between them and that kind of thing. But I do think too, that not always can he go into self-pity with her too, because I think we're all going to need some structure perhaps at this time.

Dr. James Dobson: I heard you say one time, which may be interpreted as kind of insulting to women, but I heard you say that when a woman is in the pits, when she is in that menopausal misery, that her husband may have to play a kind of parenting role with her. Describe what you mean.

Jean Lush: Well, I think too, even almost every month he has to play that at times. A husband can say, "Look, I understand that this isn't the real you, this is something now that you may be sort of even a victim of, and to give more nurturing." So I meant like more nurturing's more support. And it's really like you comfort a very small child. When a little girl is hurting, the father takes her on a knee and says, "There, there, as long as you've got daddy, it's going to be all right and I won't allow anything to touch you." I think it's somewhat like that, that I think that I would wish that husbands could do and say, we are together in this, this thing will pass. To tell her that she is going to be all right, because remember all the way through in these down periods, I think there's a lot of fear of women, and I think that women need to be reassured that she's all right.

Dr. James Dobson: The only trouble is that a child who's hurting puts her arms around daddy's neck, and snuggles up on his lap and says, "Daddy, I'm hurting," and he puts his big arms around her. But the menopausal woman who's hurting are the woman in pre-menstrual tension bites him, kicks him in the shins, hits him with a karate chop to the neck, and then says, love me.

Jean Lush: Yes, I know she does. But look, if men will rise above that, now this is where of course a man can show great leadership, and be able to say and to know, this will pass. You know what I mean? This isn't you. I believe there's an actual change of personality at that time that does not belong to the woman, you see here. And they can see it. Like my husband did at that time, he just refused to take any notice of the things I might've said. He just shrugged his shoulders and said, you're going to feel different in a few days. And that helped me an awful lot. In fact, I was able to say to my growing children, look, my bad day is ahead. I'm going to be pretty nasty. In the next few days, you're going to have the bear with me. And it was, I think my whole family were, at least they tried to be understanding. They got to recognize this.

Dr. James Dobson: Jean, let me tell you a very important point from my perspective, is that the parent of the teenage girl would do well to do the same plotting of the calendar and to brace himself or herself also, because a 14, 15, 16 year old girl can also become very, very cranky and rebellious at that time. And you might just have to overlook a little bit then, as well as you do in your own wife.

Jean Lush: By the way, a precious counselor the other day said to me, Jean, I think you're going to be proud of me. I want to show you something. He opened up a little diary that he keeps, and he showed me where he jotted down the time that his beautiful teenage daughter, you see, has a pre-menstrual tension, and he said, see, I'm learning.

Dr. James Dobson: How about that.

Jean Lush: Isn't that neat? And so, I think that's the way a father could be to allow for a bit, and not confront or deal with her, because I've seen young girls to be very irrational at that time.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And there's room for only one impulsive, irrational, volatile person in a house at one time.

Jean Lush: At one time, believe me.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you do when you get a mother and a daughter in premenstrual tension at the same time.

Jean Lush: I think you're going to have nasty rows and some nasty things said very likely.

Dr. James Dobson: Jean, I can't believe it, but our time has gone again. It just seems like our conversations barely get started and we have to end them. But you have flown all the way down from Seattle to be with us, and I deeply appreciate that. Bless you, Jean, and the work that you're doing. I feel it's extremely important. And I look forward to our next conversation.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a classic conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and the late Jean Lush. Jean's wisdom reminds us that the struggles women face during these life transitions are real, but they're also temporary. If you'd like to hear today's conversation again or to share it with a friend, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. You'll find both parts 1 and 2 of this conversation there, you'll also find information about Jean Lush's book called *Emotional Phases of a Woman's Life*. Again, for more information on Jean Lush and her conversation with Dr. James Dobson, go to drjamesdobson.org.

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